



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**AT**

**LAND ADJACENT TO SUNDOWN, CROWCASTLE**

**LANE, KIRTLINGTON, OXFORDSHIRE**

**SU 4984 2006**

*On behalf of*

*Mr. M. Ford*

**OCTOBER 2008**

**REPORT FOR** Martin Ford  
Silver Birch Cottage  
Crowcastle Lane  
Kirtlington  
Oxon

**PREPARED BY** Clare Roberts

**FIELDWORK** 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> September; 1<sup>ST</sup> October 2008

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## Summary

*A watching brief was carried out by John Moore Heritage Services at land adjacent to Sundown, Crowcastle Lane during the excavation of footings for a new three bedroom chalet bungalow. Topsoil overlying subsoil was observed, which in turn overlay an old cultivation layer. A large possible pit was uncovered below this layer, cutting the gravel natural. Some burnt limestone, and some animal bone was recovered from the fill, however this was not enough to date the feature.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site was located on the northern edge of the village of Kirtlington, on the east side of Crowcastle Lane and north of Park Close (NGR SP 4984 2006). The underlying geology is Cornbrash and the site lies at approximately 100m OD. It was formerly in use as an overgrown garden.

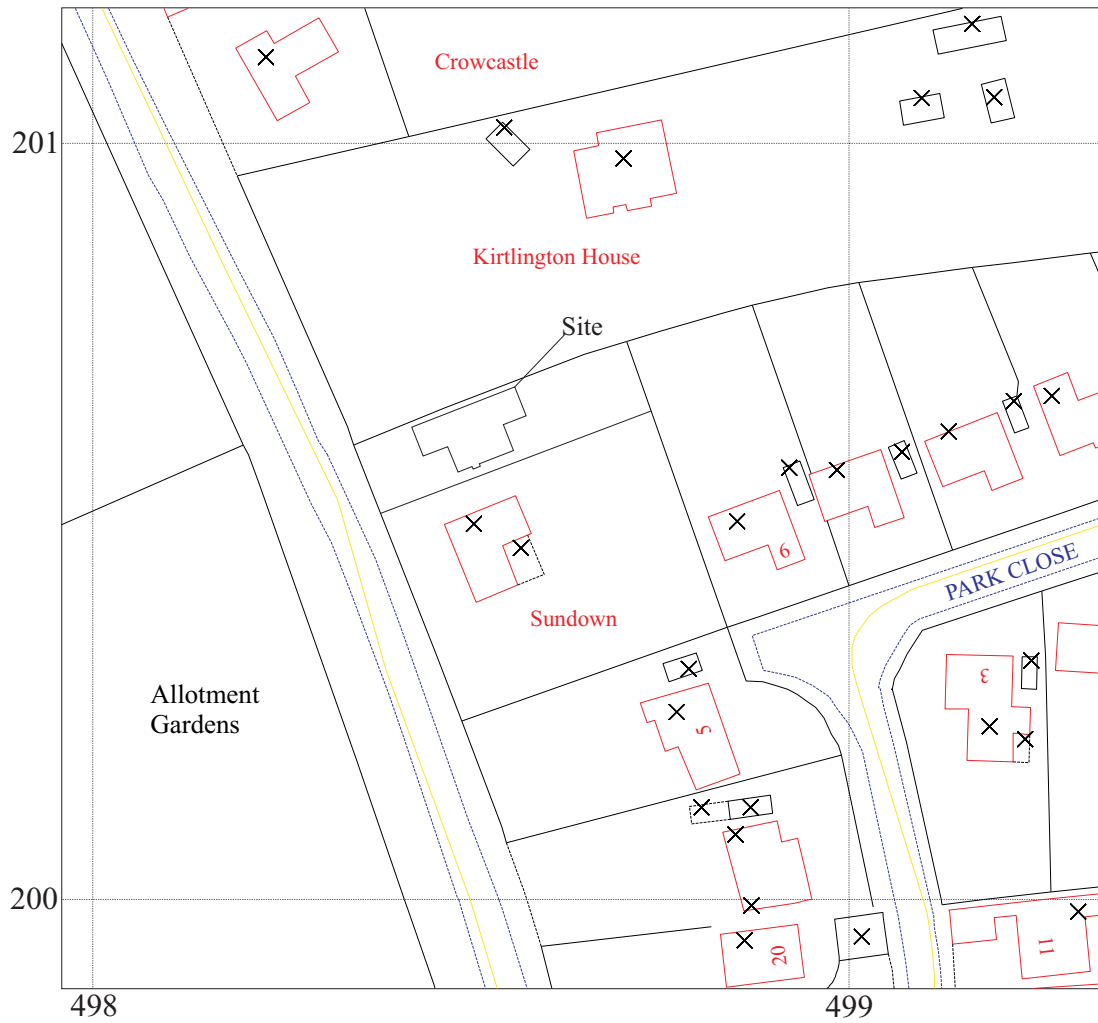
### 1.2 Planning Background

Cherwell District Council granted outline planning permission for the construction of a new dwelling in October 2004. A subsequent planning application was submitted for outline permission in March 2007 under the planning number 07/00614/OUT but was not proceeded with. Full planning permission for the construction of a three bedroom chalet bungalow was granted in February 2008 under application number 07/02598/F. Due to the potential of the site to contain archaeological remains a condition was attached to the planning permission requiring the implementation of a watching brief during groundworks. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) prepared a Brief for the work. A Written Scheme of Investigation was submitted by John Moore Heritage Services detailing how the requirements of the Brief would be met.

### 1.3 Archaeological Background

The site lies in an area of archaeological potential close to the junction of two Roman roads. Akeman Street, the Roman road from Alchester to Cirencester, is located just 286m to the north of the site (PRN 8921). Immediately north of the road is the location of an Iron Age settlement identified from pottery and kiln fragments found in the ploughsoil (PRN 960; SP 4999 2040). There are also a number of undated human burials and two Saxon burials immediately to the south of the road (PRN 959; SP 4982 2034 and PRN 1763; SP 4997 2036).

The other prehistoric Ridgeway and Roman road is located 160m to the east of the site (PRN 8926). The exact route of this road through the current settlement is unknown but a number of Roman finds have been recorded along its route. Roman coins and pottery were found in 1936 in the allotments 145m to the west of the site (PRN 1762; SP4971 2010). These finds indicate that there is Roman activity in the vicinity of the site and it is possible therefore that deposits related to the Roman and Saxon periods could be disturbed during this development.



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Figure 1. Site location

The above information has been obtained from the County Archaeological Services' Brief.

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

To make a record of any significant remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.

In particular:

- to record any evidence of remains relating to the Roman and Saxon activity known in the area

## **3 STRATEGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with OCAS. The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994) and the procedures laid down in MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

### **3.2 Methodology**

The excavation of the footings was monitored and the trench-sections cleaned and examined.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate.

## **4 RESULTS**

All archaeological features were assigned individual context numbers. This number covered both the feature cut and fill, unless the feature was sample excavated by hand. Context numbers in () indicate deposits of material. A general description of the deposits is given.

The ground level within the area of the new building was reduced, removing the top soil (**01**), 0.29m of dark brown sandy clay; and the subsoil (**02**), brown sandy clay (0.3m thick). Several small dumps of modern rubbish were observed, but not recorded, cutting the subsoil across the area, consisting of fragments of glassware dating to early-mid 1900's, and various iron fragments. The footings were then excavated as either 0.45m, or 0.75m wide trenches for the wall foundations, their maximum depth being around 1m from ground level. The subsoil overlay an orange brown sandy clay layer, which had a few inclusions of small flint pebbles (**03**); probably an older cultivation layer.

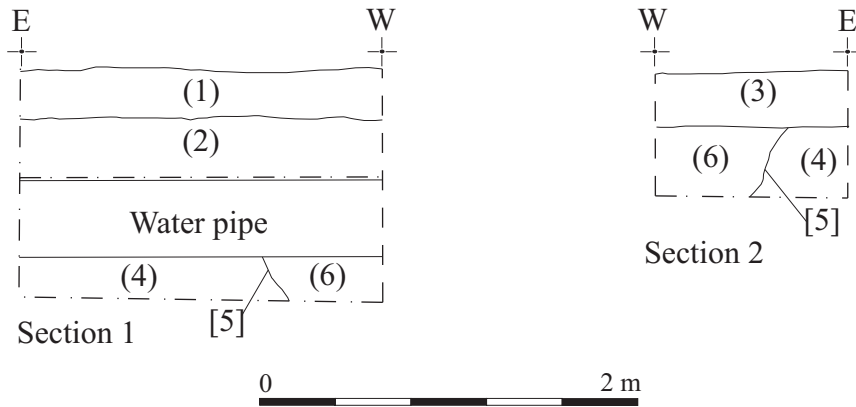
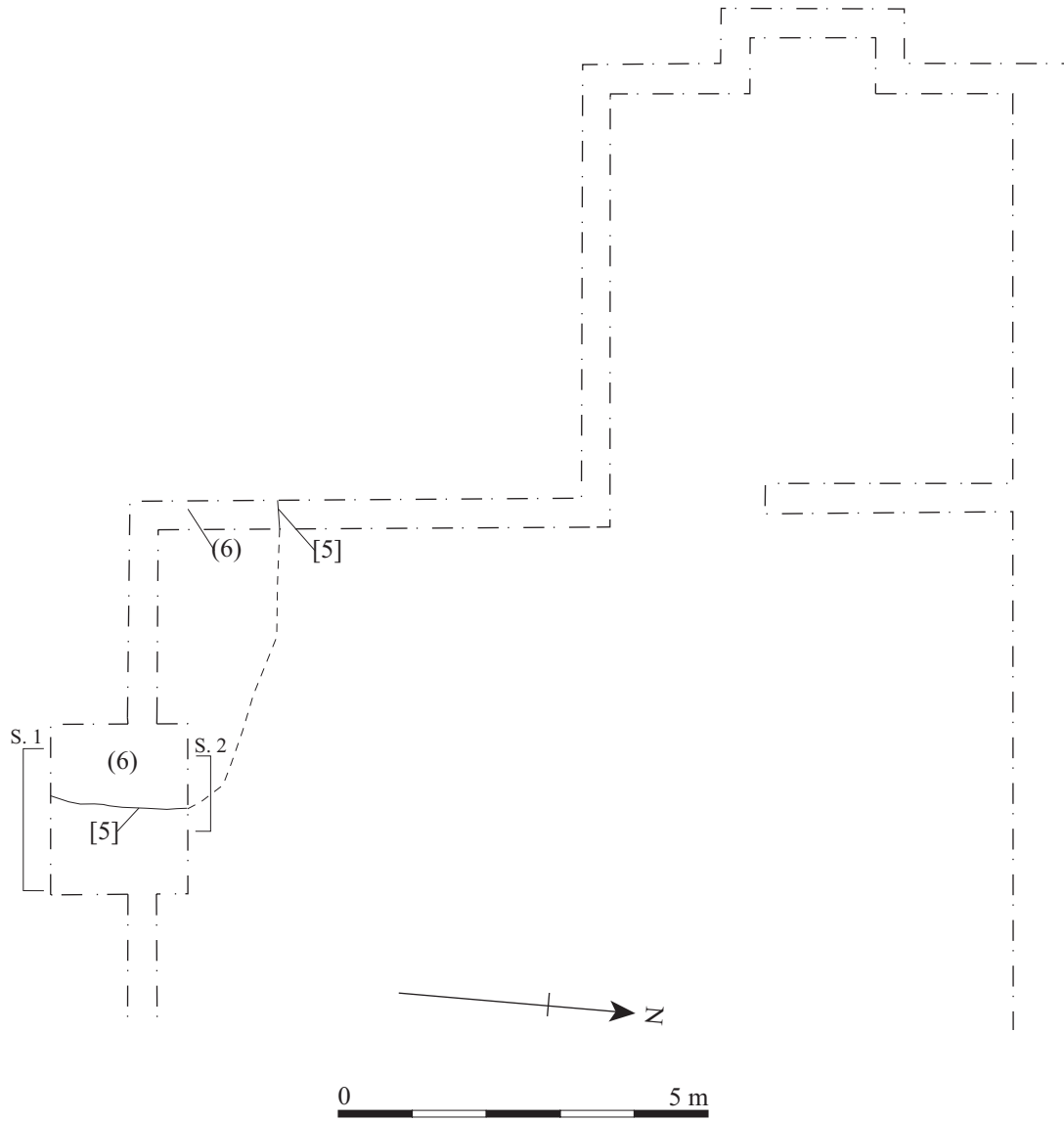


Figure 2. Plan of foundations of west end of house, and sections of feature [05]

Underlying this cultivation layer, in the south-western corner of the foundation trenches, part of a large sub-circular feature was uncovered, [05]. Its complete dimensions were impossible to establish, but it was a minimum of 2.6m long E/W by 2m. Its total depth was not established as it was not fully excavated, but it was a minimum of 0.37m deep, with steeply sloping sides. It was filled with (06) uniform light brown sandy clay, with occasional flint pebble inclusions, along with finds of degraded limestone, some of which was burnt, and animal bone too fragmented for further analysis. This feature was interpreted as a large pit cut into the natural, which was orange brown flint gravel (04).

## 5 FINDS

A few fragments of degraded shelly limestone were recovered from (06), fill of the large pit; some of which showed signs of having been burnt. Also recovered from this feature was some large mammal bone, too fragmented and degraded to warrant further analysis.

Fragments of glass bottles, including old Marmite and Bovril jars, and Eiffel Tower Lemonade were recovered along with old corroded bicycle pedals from the dumps of rubbish seen across the site in the subsoil (02); the glass dated to early-mid 1900's, and was not retained.

## 6 DISCUSSION

The layer of orange brown sandy clay (03), seen to overlay the natural is probably an old cultivation layer, since sealed due to the change of use of the land when Sundown House was built, and an orchard planted across the area now being developed. The feature [05] uncovered in the south-western corner of the site pre-dates this cultivation layer, although no dating evidence was recovered from either the layer, or the feature. The fill (06) contained some fragments of degraded limestone, burnt stone, and animal bone. Which suggests it was probably a rubbish pit, with a small possibility of industrial associations due to the presence of the burnt stone. However, as it was not fully excavated, it is very difficult to interpret confidently.

## 7 ARCHIVE

### Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

#### Paper Record

The project brief

Written Scheme of Investigation

The project report

The primary site records

The accession number for the archive is OXCMS : 2008.95